

*Preservation is Progress
...may we be worthy stewards...*

Chautauqua Historical Society

Volume 7, Issue 2, Number 18

Fall 2009

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: winter, spring, and fall.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA), and Patron levels.
- PBA members have a membership in the Chautauqua Network
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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*We have 19 PBA members, 67 Patron
members, and will send this Newsletter
to 154 households.*





The President's Message

This issue's principal story tells about the DuHadway/Thatcher family at our Chautauqua. Our cover page documents some of what took place over a year ago, October 4, 2008, when a Vermont granite bench was dedicated to the memory of Helen Margaret Thatcher. The bench was given to New Piasa Chautauqua by Rose and Tim Tomlinson and the Thatcher family.

The Thatcher bench is a visible reminder of the life and contributions of an important member of our community. We expect the bench and its space will be respected by all for decades to come. As we look around, we see other visible reminders of Chautauquans who were important to our history. The Sundial memorial, dedicated to the life and service of William Hazelett Clarkson, and the Fish, memorial, dedicated to John Packman Woods, first president of New Piasa Chautauqua, are reminders of contributions and responsibilities. The responsibilities are ours. These memorials deserve better care than they have received from us as stewards. WE believe Clarkson to be the sole Chautauquan killed in battle in World War II; Woods was an important St. Louis capitalist and an early environmentalist. The sculpted Fish that forms this

small concrete statuary celebrates his service as president of the American Fishing Institute, an early 20th century counterpart of the Sierra Club.

We celebrate Chautauqua's quasquicentennial in 2010, the 125th anniversary of our founding. We are Illinois's only remaining chautauqua. Next season will provide opportunities for us to show how serious we are about preservation and stewardship. We can start with restoring the Fish memorial to John Packman Woods, and renewing the difficult task of finding a way to more completely and permanently restore the Sundial. We can reflect on these opportunities as we pass by or take the time to sit quietly on Helen Margaret's bench.

Rose Tomlinson



Cover, clockwise from top left: Irene Thatcher Mann; eulogy by Jay Thatcher; prayer by John Paltcheff; great grandchildren (also in center), Thatcher bench seat, remarks by Tim Tomlinson, Jim Thatcher funeral flag with Navy flag and U. S. flag in background.

PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS

....may we be worthy stewards....

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The mission and purpose of the *Chautauqua Historical Society* is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua.

The Long Ago File

Spring has begun the work of transforming the scenery about Chautauqua.

Assistant Supt. Palmer has get the grounds in excellent condition. The leaves and dead grass have all been burned.

Col. Rodgers has been directing some work that decidedly improves the general appearance, among them the cutting away the heavy timber (Remember Leon?) along the river front which permits those passing up and down the river to get a good view of Chautauqua.

The auditorium and store buildings will receive a new coat of paint before the opening of the Assembly.

Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Briggs have moved into the Briggs cottage, and are now prepared to furnish board and lodgings.

New cottages will soon be erected by Mrs. Flint and Dr. Johnson, of St. Louis.

Mrs. Mannings, of St. Louis, has purchased a new lot. T. H. Perrin will make some improvements on his cottage.

H. N. Hupp, of Brighton, contractor and builder, was on the grounds, Tuesday.

Chas. Perrin, reporter on the St. Louis Star, came up with his father Tuesday to look around.

S. N. Fisk and others were present at the Director's meeting Tuesday.

The Board of Directors held their regular meeting on the grounds, Tuesday, April 12th. There were present, President O. M. Stewart, Secretary O. B. Hamilton, Treasurer

Geo. A. Dougherty and Directors H. L. Hallock, Geo. D. McCullough, J. B. Ulrich, T. H. Perrin, and C. P. Stafford. An unusually large amount of business was con-

ducted in a satisfactory manner. The writer was present when Dr. O. M. Stewart, chairman of the committee, read the program for the Assembly of (omitted), which is now almost completed. The program varies somewhat from that of previous years, and it was the unanimous opinion of all who heard it that it is doubtless the best program ever given in the history of Piasa Chautauqua. On it appear the names of men of a world wide reputation who never have visited Chautauqua before. Among these will be Bishop Fallows, Eli Perkins, Dr. M. N. Riddell, Prof. W. H. Dana and a host of others. Keep your eye on the program.

The Jerseyville Republican
July 1898

PBA programs in 2009

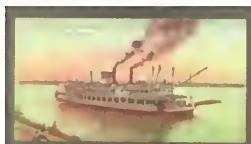
Programs listed as Piasa Bluffs Assembly events are similar to events presented when the community was called the Piasa Bluffs Assembly or Piasa Chautauqua. As a contribution to the community, the Historical Society sponsors these events and covers all program costs.

The Historical Society sponsored three PBA events in 2009. For the *Young Musicians Series*, the "Suzuki Strings in Concert" was held at the Kupferle Chapel. Seventeen young musicians, ranging from grades four through high school graduates, gave a rousing performance for an enthusiastic audience of Chautauquans and parents of the performers.

Tim Tomlinson presented the seventh annual Platform Lecture at the Town Hall in July. His title, *The Western Chautauqua*, caused some confusion among Chautauquans. Many folks said, in the days after the lecture, they were unaware the "Western Chautauqua" referred to our Chautauqua. As a result, some folks missed the lecture, thinking it was to be about some other Chautauqua located in "the West." Even so, the lecture was very well-attended, with nearly 100 people in the audience at Town Hall.

From every indication, the premier PBA event of the Season was the return of violinist Erin Schreiber to Chautauqua. Erin was the first to perform in the *Young Musicians Series*, in concert at Kupferle Chapel in 2007. This year's Schreiber concert was a "standing room only" event, followed by a reception at the cottage of Bob and Cynthia Hormell. Erin was accompanied by Martin Anderson, a gifted young pianist, composer, and professor of music at Washington University in St. Louis. The concert can be described also as a "Chautauqua volunteer" moment—Clare Kreid graciously agreed to be a "page-turner" for Martin Anderson, and added greatly to the success of the program. Many Chautauquans see Erin Schreiber as a prodigy and virtuoso, and understand fully why the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra chose her as its youngest Assistant Concertmaster ever.

Wouldn't it be great to have her return another Season?



New Piasa Chautauqua Begins

As a chautauqua, our community began in 1885. It was known originally as the Piasa Bluffs Assembly, then later as Piasa Chautauqua or Piasa Chautauqua Assembly. There has been an official "assembly" or season every summer since 1885, except for the summer of 1908. In our Winter 2009 Newsletter we referred to 1908 as *The Lost Season*, and we described what we believe happened to cause that situation. What did actually happen? Briefly, it appears the very ambitious 1907 Assembly Season was far more costly than anticipated, or less well attended than expected—revenues depended heavily on daily and weekly attendance at Assembly events and facilities. Also, we speculated that revenues decreased as the Panic of 1907 caused economic distress to the nation and our local region.

It is not certain how directly the Panic of 1907 affected the Western Chautauqua. However, we know the summer 1908 was one of civic darkness, full of contradictory expectations and anticipations for Piasa Chautauqua, full of false starts, unexpected begin-



nings, fears of uncharted journeys, and fears about unknown results.

Some accounts indicate that as much as \$30,000 was needed to cover current indebtedness. Creditors were not anxious to foreclose on Piasa Chautauqua, preferring instead to allow more time to resolve the problem, to keep the institution functioning and viable. It appeared, however, that pledges notwithstanding, the actual raising of \$30,000 moved very slowly, if at all, when cash-in-hand was the measure of progress.

As the days of summer wore on, the Hotel Chautauqua remained closed and there was no Assembly program. Yet, excursion steamboats still plied the River, and trains transported vacationers and special parties to Piasa Chautauqua. The pool was open for business.

Lot owners met to discuss purchasing their lots outright—even though they held leases, not fee simple rights. Further meetings were scheduled, canceled, and then rescheduled. The meetings were tense, acrimonious, with people and factions blaming others and being blamed. Beyond the ever-present threat of foreclosure was the prospect of outsiders, perhaps the rail or steamboat companies, purchasing the corporation property, forcing new regulations on the lot holders, and possibly creating new, unwanted directions for the Assembly.

By the end of July 1908 some focus and direction was evident. In describing a stockholders meeting, the Alton Evening Telegraph (July 31, 1908) said "There has been considerable recrimination among stockholders and directors over the question of responsibility for the debt, and it is believed among some of the directors that the best course is to resign. The plan then is to raise \$15,000, reorganize, elect a new board of directors, pay off the pressing debts, and proceed to earn money again, to pay off the remainder of the indebtedness, and proceeds to operate Chautauqua on a more respectable financial basis."

Just over a week later, the Telegraph reported Chautauqua would have a program the following year, and prospects were bright that a new board of directors would be named and a new corporation formed. A plan was emerging from the darkness and discord.

A small group of dedicated and committed Chautauquans worked diligently throughout the latter months of 1908 and into the winter of 1909 to reorganize the community and make certain the Western Chautauqua would survive the twin crises of fiscal and administrative mismanagement. On January 4, 1909, responding to a petition from a group led by "Commissioners" Christian Bernet, Frank W. Palmer, and George H. Dougherty, Illinois Secretary of State James Rose authorized the sale of Capital Stock for New Piasa Chautauqua in the amount of \$15,000. Each share would cost \$100, "to conduct a Chautauqua Assembly for religious, educational and scientific purposes and to maintain and operate in connection therewith a summer resort."

The sale of the new stock appeared to go well. A meeting of subscribers was held on February 3, 1909 to announce that the one hundred fifty shares were



John Packman Woods

sold or pledged. The subscribers elected a new board of directors for the 1909 season. John P. Woods of St. Louis was elected to be the first president of the New Piasa Chautauqua Corporation. Illinois Secretary of State, James A. Rose, certified the new corporate status on April 6, 1909.

Feelings of optimism abounded, and the new leadership was greeted with enthusiasm, as evidenced by the language of the 1909 Program Book:

There never were twelve better men situated for directors than the twelve men now serving in that capacity. Conservative men. Faithful men. Hopeful men. We have had such men on the board before but this is a new epoch in Piasa Chautauqua matters and we are ready to

compliment those who would give their lives if need be to perpetuate this great resort. It is a new place. New buildings. New and needed improvements everywhere. A new day for a wonderful people. The New Piasa Chautauqua; the best people on earth. We have good air here. Clean food. Cool breezes. Clear, cold spring water. Fine bathing pool. Good baseball diamond. Good tennis courts. Good croquet grounds. Handy swings. Everything for comfort.....

The 1909 Program book claimed the season would be one of the brightest ever. It was not an idle claim. The Hotel Chautauqua was reopened. Trains and boats brought excursion visitors to the riverside resort. The boarding houses were busy; the store was open. The women of the community brought their power to bear on the community in two separate board committees: Reception and Decoration. The Boy's Club and Girl's Club performed on New Piasa Chautauqua Day; they were described as "prodigies." The Western Chautauqua was alive and well.

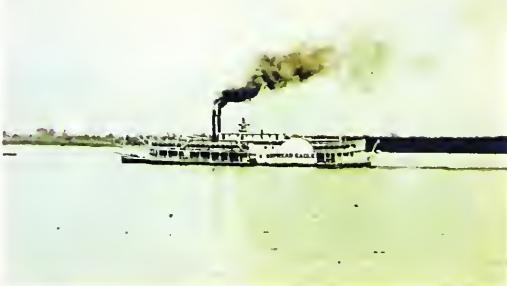
The new owners: who were they?

The 150 shares of NPC stock were bought by 75 persons. One large investor was East St. Louis grocer A. E. Meintz, who purchased seven shares. Meintz owned "Chatterbox," now Judy Hurd's cottage. Two of today's Chautauquans are descendants of A. E. Meintz: Mary Street and Bert Hampton. Almost 23% of the investors were individual women. The "smallest" investor was Ida Steen, who purchased one-quarter share for twenty-five dollars.

*Tellie
Meinhardt*

So far as we know, only Bill and Gordon Grundmann and John Beckwith are directly related to original shareholders: Dr. W. F. Grundmann (two shares) and A. E. Beckwith (two shares).

Mathilde Meinhardt, elected first president of the LCIA in 1910, bought two shares.



*Mathilde
Meinhardt*

Forthcoming: *The Western Chautauqua*

The Historical Society is joining with Historic Elsah Foundation to publish a book by Tim Tomlinson about our Chautauqua history. The title will be *The Western Chautauqua*. In 1885, a joint committee composed of Methodist ministers and laymen from the St. Louis Ministerial Association and the Southern Illinois Sunday School conference was charged with the responsibility to locate a site for a “western Chautauqua.” This Chautauqua was to be modeled after the New York Chautauqua, founded in 1874.

The book is a revision and expansion of an earlier work published by Historic Elsah Foundation in 1974. This earlier work was written by William Fabian, who was then a Principia student. Fabian is now retired and lives in Colorado. Tomlinson has been in contact with Fabian about the original chapters, looking for comments and advice.

Fabian’s book ended the Western Chautauqua story in 1974, before the Reorganization process was fully under way and six years before it was completed. Tomlinson is adding new chapters to describe the history of our Chautauqua over the last four decades. This past year he has culled through past Program books, searched through decades of the *Channels*, reviewed visual material, and especially, interviewed key figures in the history of the past forty years. So, beyond revising and amending the Fabian material, *The Western Chautauqua* will have new information, photographs, and images.

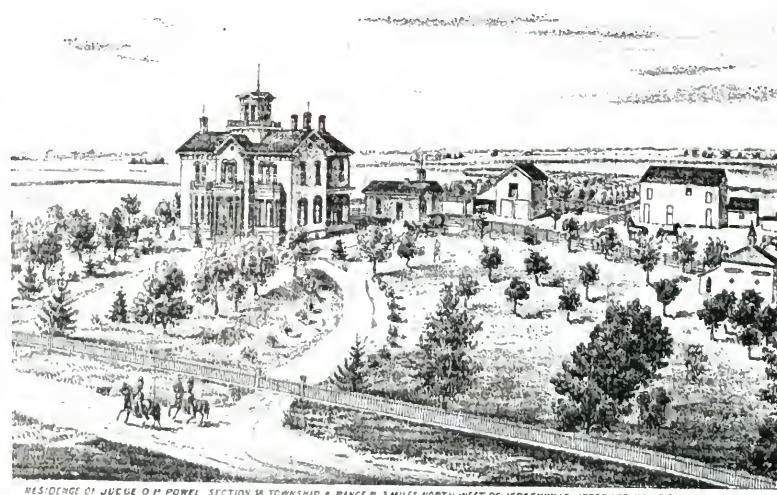
The publication of *The Western Chautauqua* is being funded jointly by the Historical Society and Historic Elsah Foundation. An image for the cover has been selected—a painting by Frederick Oakes Sylvester, titled *Gold Crowned*, owned by the Principia Corporation, which has given permission for use of the image. Mark Hurd is assisting with the cover design; Kathy Brammeier is the principal editor; and Jeanne Tomlinson Bonzon is the principal digital development consultant. Publication is set for late next spring or early summer, to be coordinated with the celebration of the 125th

anniversary of our community. Around seven hundred copies will be printed, and will be available from the Historical Society and Historic Elsah Foundation.

Local Connections—the DuHadway/Thatcher Family

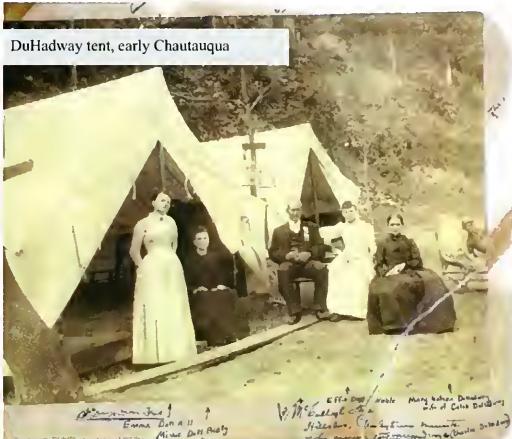
Many of the original cottage owners and shareholder/leaseholders were from the city of Jerseyville and other parts of Jersey County, so, a lot of Jersey County names are connected with our Chautauqua. While this article is mostly about Helen Margaret DuHadway Thatcher, it is also about her husband, Jim Thatcher, who was sometimes called “Billy,” but mostly Jim. Other names make cameo appearances: DuHadway, Powel, Fulkerson, even Charles Russell, the famed American western artist.

Oliver Hazard Perry Powel, Helen Margaret’s maternal great grandfather, was born in 1819 near Rogersville, Tennessee. He was named for Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, hero of the Battle of Lake Erie, War of 1812. In the 1840s Powel migrated from Tennessee and settled in Jerseyville, where he was active in agriculture, finance, and local politics. Before his death in 1896, Powel was a county judge and considered himself “always a Democrat.” Sarah Russell Powel, his wife, was the sister of famed American western artist Charles Russell’s grandmother. Charles Russell spent part of his boyhood visiting a maternal uncle, Col. William Houston Fulkerson, and president of Piasa Chautauqua in 1902 and 1903.



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Caleb DuHadway, Helen Margaret's paternal great grandfather, was the first of his line to live in Jersey County. Caleb was born in Baltimore, MD in 1833. His father was a French emigrant, and his mother was



French-Canadian. Caleb was educated at Ohio University in Athens, Ohio, and studied at the Ohio Medical College. He was a surgeon for the Ninth Kentucky Regiment in the Civil War, Confederate States of America. He enlisted in 1862 and was discharged in 1864. He moved with his family to Jerseyville that same year.

Born in Jerseyville, May 30, 1890, Fred Alan DuHadway, Caleb's grandson and Helen Margaret's father, graduated from Jersey Township High School, and attended the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, where he received a law degree. He married Cornelia Fulkerson Powel in 1917. The family moved to Hardin, Illinois for a short time, where he was State's Attorney for Calhoun County. They later moved back to Jerseyville where DuHadway continued to practice law and became active in civic and political affairs. He was State's Attorney for Jersey County from 1936 to 1940, an Elder of the First Presbyterian Church in Jerseyville, president of the Jersey Township High School board, and the United State's government's appeal agent for the Jersey County Selective Service Board in World War II.

Cornelia Fulkerson Powel DuHadway, Helen Margaret's mother, was named for a daughter of Cornelia Fulkerson, wife of Colonel William Houston Fulkerson. Before Cornelia's father, John F. Powel, married her mother, he had been engaged to Cornelia Fulkerson,

who died before the marriage took place. It was John's idea to name his first child after the woman he didn't get to marry. Cornelia DuHadway attended Jersey County schools, and was a graduate of Lindenwood College. At Chautauqua, she was active in committee work, and was president of the LCIA from 1957 to 59.

Fred and Cornelia DuHadway, with their daughters Helen Margaret and Mary Jean, purchased a cottage in Chautauqua in 1939. The cottage at what is now 6 Jersey Avenue was built in 1906 by Harold A. Tunehorst, a Jerseyville businessman, who also built the Kentucky Home across the street. DuHadway owned the cottage at 36 Jersey Avenue (now the Laffler cottage) for a brief time in 1941, selling it to New Piasa Chautauqua that same year. Fred was active in Chautauqua affairs, serving on various committees and as legal counsel for the community. He was president of New Piasa Chautauqua in 1952 and 1953.

Fred DuHadway played an important role in 1954 when the life of the community was threatened by the possibility of the area being selected as the site of the new Air Force Academy. He helped organize the opposition to this possibility, writing letters and using his political and legal skills to persuade the government to look elsewhere for the Academy site. The Thatcher family still displays a small loving cup given to Fred DuHadway by the LCIA to thank him for his efforts. The cup's inscription does provide some humor to any one who reads it carefully or listens to its literal meaning:

Thanks to
Fred DuHadway
For Saving Chautauqua
From the LCIA

Helen Margaret DuHadway grew up in Jerseyville, and as a child was a frequent visitor to Chautauqua. After graduation from Jersey Township high school, she followed her mother's example by attending Lindenwood College. Helen Margaret majored in English and French, and her first job was teaching those subjects at her high school *alma mater* in Jerseyville.

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James William Thatcher (Jim) also attended local schools in Jerseyville. He attended Notre Dame University and later the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. After college Jim took a job with Socony Vacuum of East St. Louis. His parents, Carl and Irene Thatcher, were as notable in local circles as the DuHadways. Carl Thatcher was a City Councilman in Jerseyville. Jim's maternal grandparents' family home was on Main Street, site of the present *518 South Restaurant*.

Helen Margaret DuHadway and James William Thatcher announced their engagement on March 17, 1941 at a Saturday evening bridge party in Jerseyville. The couple was married three weeks later, April 5, in the rectory of St. Francis Xavier Church; Helen Margaret's younger sister, Mary Jean, was the maid of honor.

Jim Thatcher enlisted in the United States Navy in 1942, after the United States entered the World War in late 1941; he served for almost two years in the North African



Jim, with children in Algeria, *circa 1943*

theater before being discharged in 1944. During much of the time Jim was overseas, Helen Margaret lived with her parents in Jerseyville, and probably spent summers in Chautauqua at the family cottage, built in 1906 by H. A. Tunehorst, a Jerseyville businessman, who also built the Kentucky Home, across the street from the cottage.

The war over, Jim and Helen Margaret lived in the Edwardsville for many years, raising a family: Penny, Jay, Irene, Alan, and Charles. Helen Margaret taught first grade at St. Boniface School in Edwardsville, and then in the Glen Carbon system for many years. She sang in the choir, taught Sunday school, and was an elder in the First Presbyterian Church in Edwardsville.

Helen Margaret and Jim continued to be "visiting" Chautauquans during her parent's lifetime. Later, she and Jim retired to Chautauqua, making the Jersey Avenue cottage their permanent home. Their new Chautauqua status came

at the time of the Reorganization movement in the late 1970s.

Helen and Jim supported the Reorganization plan wholeheartedly. Jim served on various Board committees, and was a NPC Board member for a time. It was Helen Margaret, however, who entered into Chautauqua life with spirit and determination. She was president of the LCIA in 1985, and was elected to the NPC Board of Directors for a three-year term in the 1990s. Chautauqua life also included a social dimension for the Thatchers. They were charter members of the "Dirty Dozen," a spirited group dedicated to travel and fun together. The group consisted of the Thatchers, Bill and Hilda Osborn, Jerry and Corinne Podesva, Ted and Evelyn Palmer, Bob and Micki Allen, and Bill and Vi Hobbs.



Her children saw her as the "Queen of Chautauqua," a title she didn't fully appreciate, but one which was probably shared by many beyond her family. Chautauquans remember Helen Margaret's powerful influence in organizing the community response to the devastating 1993 flood. Determined to see the community rebuilt, she saw the challenge as an opportunity. Helen Margaret was dedicated to Chautauqua and the idea of community. She was angry with bickering, and was willing to speak up when she found some matter or comment inappropriate. In an age and time when many people prefer anonymity and often hide, Helen Margaret represented the best spirit of Chautauqua, an open mind, a seeking mind.



Her last public act was an appearance in the Chautauqua Player's production of *Harvey* in August 2006. A few weeks before her death in June 2007 she traveled to Jerseyville to buy a stove—she wanted the cottage to be "complete." At the end, according to the family that surrounded her with love and honor, "a Carolina wren built a nest in the bird house

near the cottage. That had never happened before. The hummingbirds were more plentiful than ever."



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